
YUKON FLATS
RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT AREA

A NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE PROGRAM SERVING THE MEMBER
TRIBES OF THE COUNCIL OF ATHABASCAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS



**BUILDING THRIVING TRIBAL VILLAGES & ECONOMIES TO
COMPLIMENT A TRADITIONAL NATIVE LIFESTYLE**

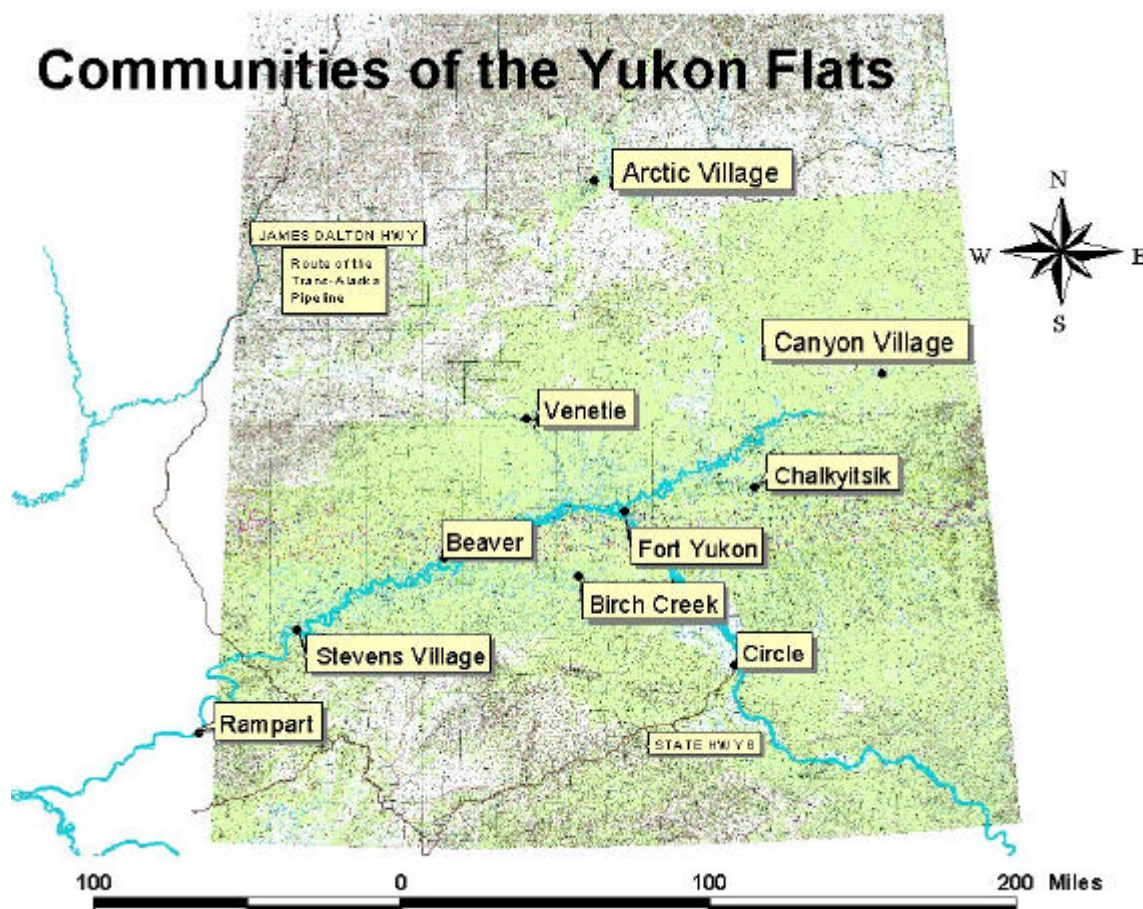
REVISED AREA PLAN

2001

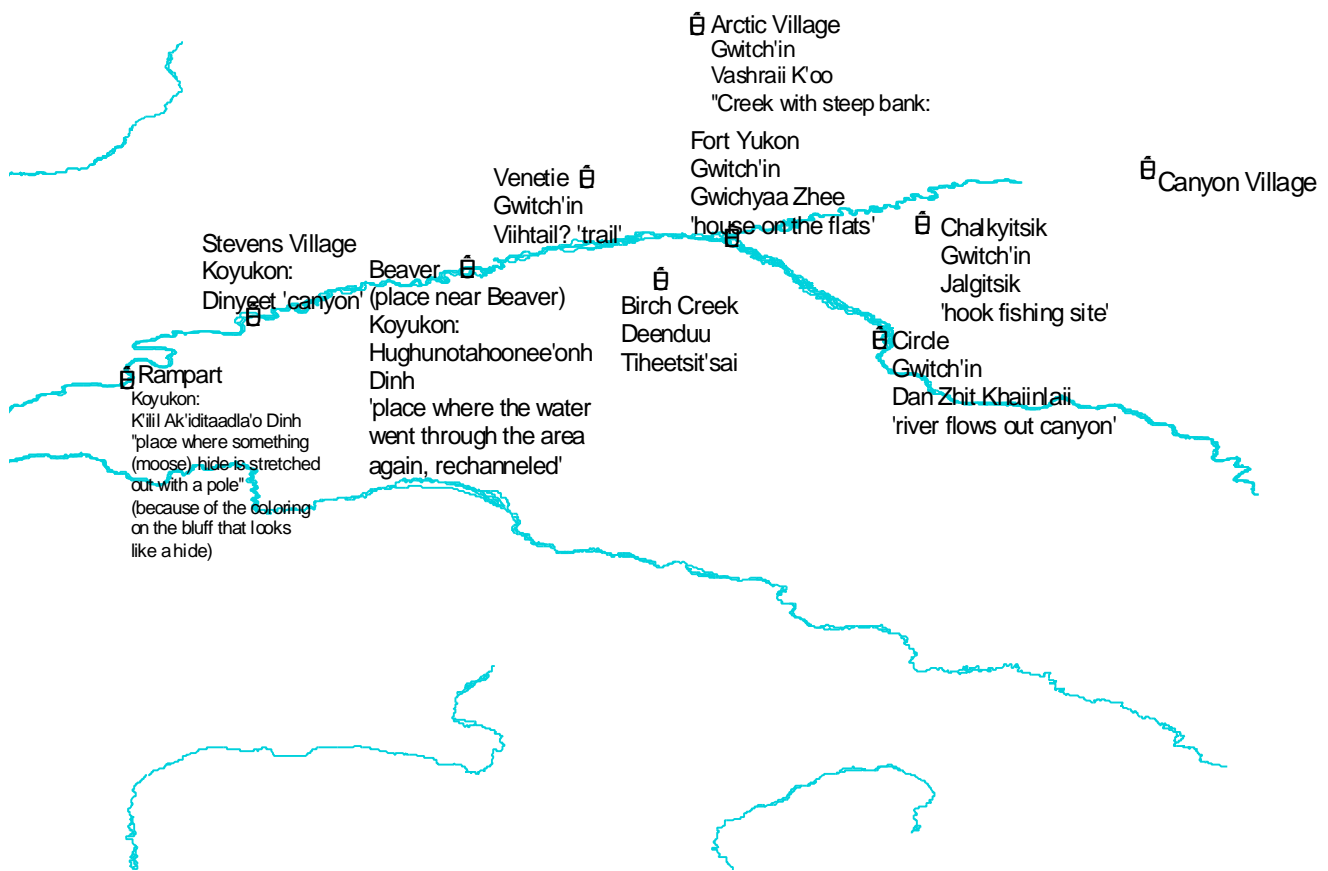
TABLE OF CONTENTS

YUKON FLATS RC&D AREA MAPS	ii
PREFACE	iv
VISION & MISSION STATEMENT	v
REGIONAL DESCRIPTION	1
Socio-Economic Conditions	1
Land Status	2
Physical Characteristics	3
Transportation & Infra-structure	4
OPPORTUNITIES & OBSTACLES	6
Opportunities: Community Development	7
Economic Development	7
Natural Resource Management	9
Focus on Planning / Capacity Building / Education / Training	10
Obstacles	10
GOALS & OBJECTIVES	11
Community Development	11
Economic Development	12
Natural Resource Management	13
Cultural & Traditional Sustainability	14
Programmatic Development	14
AGREEMENTS	14

YUKON FLATS RC&D AREA MAPS



Native Place Names of the Yukon Flats



PREFACE

The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments was formed in September 1985, when the ten federally recognized tribes of the Yukon Flats gathered in Fort Yukon to memorialize Chief Esias Loola, the last traditional chief in Fort Yukon who died in Seattle in 1957. During this gathering the leaders and the people confronted the contemporary problems affecting their villages. Clarence Alexander, previous chairman of CATG, summed up the results of history and identified the goal of CATG during their second meeting the following summer:

...it's that responsibility has been taken away from us. For a long time we haven't been responsible for anything and, what we're really gearing up to do right now is trying to take control and take that responsibility - our responsibility to our community - is what we're really trying to do. We always leave it to somebody - we leave our responsibilities up to somebody else. I think it's time that we take control of our own responsibilities. I think that's really what we're doing.

CATG has met many times since 1985 to explore alternatives to improve the economy of the region. CATG leadership felt that the Resource Conservation and Development Program was a natural extension of their work, reflecting the same 'do it yourself' philosophy. CATG sought and gained RC&D area status for the Yukon Flats region in 1994. This Area Plan is a result of those efforts and is an indication of where we have been and where we are today and our direction for future generations.

We have realized that effective Natural Resource Management programs will play the most important role in our communities, our economy and in maintaining the quality of life we enjoy in the Yukon Flats. We have focussed our energies on strengthening tribal authority, building capacities, and training ourselves in an effort to manage our own programs and services, bringing employment and self-sufficiency to the Yukon Flats.

The Yukon Flats RC&D Council is working to create economic diversification through the development of their natural resources and through the education and training of their workforce to manage their resources. During the RC&D Area planning process, the local Council established the following desired characteristics for adopting future economic related projects and activities in the Yukon Flats area:

- Empowers local village governments to participate in a cooperative land and resource management planning process
- Develops a locally controlled renewable resource industry based on sustainable yields
- Demonstrates potential for expansion into value-added resource products
- Utilizes unemployed and/or under employed skilled labor
- Provides for planning, training, and development
- Replaces and improves existing outside management structures with locally managed and operated services.

VISION STATEMENT

T'ee teraa'in *

The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments' Yukon Flats Resource Conservation and Development Area's vision is of self-sufficient communities with a shared commitment to promote common goals and taking responsibility for a culturally integrated economy based on customary and traditional values in a contemporary setting.

MISSION STATEMENT

T'ee teraa'in

The Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments' Yukon Flats Resource Conservation and Development Area's mission is to advocate and provide technical assistance to enhance the regional economy by protecting and supporting local employment and private enterprise; to protect and manage traditional tribal land and resources for future generations; to empower tribal governments; to provide and improve health care and promote healthy living.

* the way we do things/survival

REGIONAL DESCRIPTION

The Yukon Flats Resource Conservation & Development Area (RC&D) covers 35 million acres located 145 air miles northeast of Fairbanks. Tribal (Alaska Native Allotments, Alaska Native Corporations, & Alaska Native Tribal Governments) and Federal (Wildlife Refuges) lands make-up the region. The primary rivers include the Yukon, the Chandalar, the Black River, Birch Creek, and the Porcupine. The river system connects the region's villages in the summer months, snow machine travel connects them through the winter, and bush airline service connects the villages through all the seasons. The region encompasses ten native Athabascan (Gwich'in and Koyukon) villages, who together formed a tribal consortium, the Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments (CATG). They are: Arctic Village, Beaver, Birch Creek, Canyon, Chalkyitsik, Circle, Fort Yukon, Rampart, Stevens, and Venetie. The tribally elected Chiefs serve as the CATG Board of Directors and the RC&D Council.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The Yukon Flats of the northern Alaskan interior are the traditional lands of the Gwich'in and Koyukon Athabascan peoples whose current population is estimated at 1,210 (US Census 2000). This native population comprises over 90% of the total regional population, with an approximate 110 non-natives also living in the region (US Census 2000). There are an approximate 750 males and 620 females living in the region (US Census 2000). There are an estimated 505 total households in the region.

The Gwich'in and Koyukon Athabascans of the region inhabit ten remote villages where they live highly traditional subsistence lifestyles to this day. Village populations can range from less than ten inhabitants (Canyon Village) to nearly 600 (Fort Yukon). Their culture was traditionally nomadic, following the seasons and the resources which fed their families. The villages were originally settled in the late 1800's and early 1900's due to external resource extraction, gold mining, trapping, trading, and schooling. In their contemporary setting, the seasons and the land still dictate their activities and their livelihood. Locally harvested moose, caribou, bear, sheep, salmon, whitefish, grayling, ducks, geese, ptarmigan, rabbit, and berries comprise the majority of their diet, which is now supplemented from processed foods shipped in from industrial centers such as Fairbanks. The subsistence lifestyle not only provides the primary diet for the region, but also serves as a mainstay in supporting cultural norms, practices, and language.

Trapping is another traditional source of income which is still utilized today, but today trappers are facing low prices for their fur because of high ranched-fur inventories and the threat of closed markets if they do not comply with "humane" trapping standards. Trapping has always been the economic mainstay of the long winter months but current trends of excessive snow and warm weather coupled with periods of extreme cold cause many to look for employment elsewhere. We need to stabilize the trapping industry and create alternative seasonal employment.

In addition to the subsistence lifestyle, there is a small cash economy present in the region. Wage employment is so limited that people try to work as often as possible to earn needed cash for subsistence activities. Sometimes people are forced to choose between full-time wage employment and those same subsistence activities. There is a conflict between two cultural value systems that have not found an appropriate balance or way to interface with the traditional western job market. Handi-crafts, seasonal construction, federal and state employment, and small-scale tourism all lend to the marginal cash economy of the Yukon Flats. The dollars that do come to the Yukon Flats are not being circulated here. They migrate with the people who come in to work or are spent on commodities and services in industrial centers. Gas, diesel, ammunition, motor operated machinery and modes of transportation which have become integral elements of the subsistence lifestyle are all purchased from industrial centers.

The cost of living in the rural villages of the Yukon Flats is high. The annual income in the region may vary anywhere between \$5,000 and \$50,000, with approximately \$13,000 being the median average (US Census 1990). However, high freight, utility, fuel and food costs reduce this income to half its purchasing power. Unemployment rates are also unproportionally high, especially during the winter months. The average rate of unemployment within a village is exorbitant at 36.6 % (US Census 1990). Workers from outside the community hold most of the professional jobs available in the village health and education services.

The region is highly dependent upon state and federal welfare or handout programs. The subsistence economy is under constant threat because there is little local control over the regulation of the natural resources that support it. This threat has been expressed at economic development conferences, meetings, and workshops that have been held in the Yukon Flats since September 1985.

LAND STATUS

Land ownership in the Yukon Flats is shaped by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), and the National Wildlife Refuge System. Within the region, the major land owners include the Federal Government, Native Corporations, and Tribal Governments. There are additionally state land holdings in the Yukon Flats region. When mapped the region appears as a checkerboard, divided amongst Regional and Village corporations, Tribal Governments, Native Allotments, and Wildlife Refuges.

A majority of the traditional Athabascan land base in the Yukon Flats is now owned and managed by the Federal Government, and they serve one of the primary actors in the management of subsistence resources in the region. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages the Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge which surround the village land holdings.

ANCSA provided payments and land to Native Village Corporations and Regional Corporations established under the act. In the Yukon Flats, villages own anywhere from 2 to 7 townships depending on their population, totalling an approximate 800,000 acres owed

by Native Village Corporations in the Yukon Flats. In addition to these the Regional Corporation, Doyon, Limited owns townships between the village townships. This was done to maximize land protection, guarantee access to subsistence resources, and expand economic opportunities. Doyon, Limited is entitled to the subsurface rights of Village Corporation lands as well as their own inholdings.

An exception is the Native Village of Venetie Tribal Government who formed the 1.8 million acre Venetie Indian Reservation in 1943. During the 1971 ANCSA settlement they opted to maintain the entitlement to their land instead of a monetary settlement. They turned the land over to the Tribal Council and dissolved the corporation. In the village of Birch Creek the Village Corporation transferred all land ownership to the Tribal Council. Several other villages are contemplating a similar transfer because this action offers the greatest protection for traditional use areas. Currently the Gwichyaa Zhee Corporation of Fort Yukon is in the process of transferring all land ownership (214,479 acres) to the Native Village of Fort Yukon Tribal Government.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The Yukon Flats is a relatively flat, marshy basin floor marked by flood plains, terraces, alluvial fans, and small areas of sand dunes. Many braided and meandering streams traverse the area, while numerous thaw ponds, oxbow lakes, and meander scars pattern the ground. Surface water in streams, lakes and bogs is abundant throughout the majority of the region. The Yukon Flats is bordered in the north by the Brooks Range, which project out of the Flats approximately 150 miles north of the Arctic Circle, and is bordered in the south by the White Mountains.

A dry continental sub-arctic climate prevails throughout the region, with warm summers and long cold winters. The mountains which surround the eco-region isolate it from the weather systems affecting the neighboring regions. Consequently, summer temperatures tend to be higher and winter temperatures tend to be much colder. The average annual temperature is approximately 25 degrees Fahrenheit. Daily winter temperatures range from lows as low as 60 degrees Fahrenheit below 0 to highs around 10 degrees Fahrenheit below 0. Daily summer temperatures range from lows in the 30's to highs in the 90's, although freezing can occur in any month. Annual precipitation is low averaging 6 to 10 inches and average snowfall averages at about 45 inches. The Yukon River remains frozen from early October through late May.

Boreal forests dominate the landscape with black spruce, white spruce, balsam poplar, paper birch, and trembling aspen. Black spruce forests often grow in permafrost flats where drainage is poor. Common understory shrubs include bog birch, labrador-tea, crowberry, and blueberry. Feathermosses are common. Many wet depressions are dominated by alder and willow swamp communities. The low shrub layer typically includes currants, high and low bush cranberries. Bluejoint, sedge, horsetail, and marsh five-finger are common herbs. Sedge tussock communities dominate the coldest, wettest sites on the Yukon Flats. Mosses and berries are present here. Well-drained alluvial soils support mixed forests of white spruce and paper birch. Natural levees support a forest of white spruce and balsam poplar. Here understory consists of alder and willow, prickly rose, and high bush

cranberry. Tall willow, birch, and alder communities are scattered throughout the region. Wildfires are common in the Yukon Flats.

The rich habitats of the interior lowlands support moose, black and brown bears, wolf, and caribou. Smaller mammals include wolverine, lynx, red fox, beaver, snowshoe hare, mink, muskrat, weasel, marten, red squirrel, and porcupine. Upland birds include northern hawk-owls, great horned owls, rough grouse, spruce grouse, boreal chickadees, and red poles. Runs of king and chum salmon spawn in clear water streams each summer. Other fish supporting the region include northern pike, whitefish, burbot, and grayling. During spring, millions of migrating birds converge on the Flats, arriving from four continents, including various species of ducks, geese, and cranes. The region has one of the highest nesting densities of waterfowl in North America

TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

The villages of the Yukon Flats are connected by the river system, regularly scheduled air service, snow machine trails, and dog sled trails. Throughout the summer months the Yukon River and tributaries provides for barge service and river boat travel between villages. One village, Circle, is located on the Alaska road system where the Steese Highway ends at the Yukon River. All villages, with the exception of Canyon Village, have FAA approved airstrips and are serviced by bush airlines. The cost of transporting goods into the villages is the primary reason for the high cost of living.

Telephone service and television reception are available by satellite. Residents rely on close communication with friends and relatives in other villages for local news. Several local newsletters are also produced. There is no local newspaper. Gwandak Public Broadcasting, Incorporated is a 5,000 watt public radio station located in Fort Yukon, that came on the air in fall of 1993 and reaches most of the villages in the Yukon Flats. With the exception of Birch Creek and Canyon Villages, all Yukon Flats villages are serviced by the U.S. Postal Service and maintain a local post office.

Village utility services managed in each community by Tribal Governments provides electricity to homes, but costs are extremely high for diesel fuel which has to be flown in in small amounts. People drain their few available dollars by paying from \$.25 to \$.70 per kilowatt hour with a weighted average of \$.35 per kilowatt hour. Occasionally fuel can be barged in during the summer months. Currently, the villages of Venetie and Arctic Village are operating solar panels to operate their village washeterias. The transition to sustainable energies is a recent development in the Yukon Flats.

All communities, with the exception of Fort Yukon, are serviced by Washeterias, managed by individual Tribal Governments. The village-based Washeterias provide shower facilities, laundry facilities, and treated water. Individual households haul their own water for personal use and consumption. Out-houses and indoor honey-buckets are used for personal sanitation. Within the village of Fort Yukon there is a piped water system providing service to the majority of homes, the municipal government manages the water system. Water is piped into individual homes and a pump and haul system is used for removal of waste water.

The nearest hospital is in Fairbanks, about 250 miles away by air. Health care is currently provided by the CATG and by the Tanana Chiefs Conference (within only one village of the region). Most of the villages receive one or two doctor visits and dentist visits each year. Health Aides provide interim services in small village clinics. If residents have health problems that require a doctor, hospitalization, or a dentist between village visits, they must travel to Fairbanks or Fort Yukon by airplane to receive treatment. Fort Yukon has a larger clinic with two Physician's Assistants and a Nurse Practitioner, but patients are only recommended to go on to a doctor if there is a serious problem.

The villages of the region are serviced by the Yukon Flats School District (YFSD) whose headquarters are located in Fort Yukon. Schools have recently been closed in Rampart and Birch Creek due to low enrollment. The YFSD provides education for students from preschool through twelfth grade, approximately 350 students in the region are served. The YFSD also operates a vocational-technical high-school program in Fort Yukon. The region is also served by the University of Alaska Fort Yukon Rural Center.

OPPORTUNITIES & OBSTACLES

An integrated subsistence and cash-based economy is developing in the Yukon Flats. Subsistence practices provide households with the majority of their dietary, heating (wood gathering), and housing (log buildings) needs. Trapping, traditional craft production for local use and export, tourism, fire fighting, seasonal construction, small business endeavors, and service provision (local, state, federal, and tribal government positions) serve as the primary sources of cash income for families. It is this micro-economy which sustains people. Opportunities for economic diversification require planning, training, and work force development to take full advantage of their potential. These elements must be an integral part of every project undertaken by the Yukon Flats RC&D. As the Council becomes aware of development options and economic opportunities, they will evaluate them based on the following criteria:

- The people of the Yukon Flats will continue to benefit from their subsistence economy as a valued sustainable way of life that must remain available to its people in perpetuity.
- Development must support and supplement the subsistence way of life and the correlating economy.

Efforts to spur economic growth that are seen as most adaptable to our way of life at the present time include the fur industry, tourism, outfitting and guiding, resource management, forestry, fire management, sustainable energies, agriculture, and contracting of government services under Public Law 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act.

Desired characteristics for economic opportunities in the Yukon Flats:

- 1) Develops industries which are compatible with the long range goals and objectives of the local communities.
- 2) Empowers local village governments to participate in a cooperative Land and Resource Management Planning Process.
- 3) Develops a locally controlled renewable resource industry based on sustainable yields.
- 4) Demonstrates potential for expansion into value-added resource products.
- 5) Utilizes unemployed and/or under employed skilled labor.
- 6) Provides for planning, training, and development.
- 7) Replaces and improves existing outside management structures with locally managed and operated services.

OPPORTUNITIES:

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

SUSTAINABLE ENERGIES. The present cost of power within the remote villages of the Yukon Flats is excessive and draining to the local economy base. The existing power system is based upon expensive shipments of diesel flown in by large outside diesel companies, supplying local generators. This system is not only excessively expensive but also environmentally degrading, diesel contamination of the land is common throughout the region. Opportunities exist to purchase fuel as a consortium and to develop sustainable energies. Investigating the feasibility of a bulk fuel purchasing agreement could substantially reduce energy costs in the Yukon Flats. Solar, wind, natural gas, and small-scale hydro are all possibilities to offset the expense and contamination of the current power system. Demonstration projects in solar energy are now underway in Arctic Village and Venetie, and Fort Yukon is slated to develop their natural gas reserve in the near future. More efforts need to be made to minimize the economic burden of power supply.

FACILITIES. Currently many villages on the Yukon Flats are in need of improved facilities and additional space. Adequate facilities and infra-structure are necessary to facilitate economic development and self-sufficient communities. Health facilities, multi-purpose buildings, and operational business space are all in high demand in the region. Recent appropriations for capital projects in rural Alaska provide villages with an opportunity to improve their facilities and build local infra-structure.

QUALITY OF LIFE. Supporting youth, caring for community members, and promoting opportunities for growth and learning are important elements for maintaining health for generations to come. Providing recreational opportunities, sobriety efforts, search & rescue support, and other opportunities for personal and community health are goals of the region. With improved facilities for and services to our communities, families will grow in the region for generations to come.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FOREST INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT. The development of timber resources holds a major advantage as an industry in the region because the production of timber and logs locally would minimize costs of construction for capital projects and would allow for a large cash income to stay within the region instead of being spent elsewhere. There is a sizable work force in the region that is under employed and under utilized. People are skilled in heavy equipment operation, carpentry, tool and equipment maintenance, sawmill operation, and logging. Villagers are very familiar with logging practices and their existing stands of quality timber. Opportunities for saw-mill development and training, forest inventories, log-housing programs, and forestry planning should be explored and developed. Currently, Stevens Village Natural Resource Department is completing their forest inventory and forest stewardship program and Circle Village Council is operating a functional saw-mill

and timber production business.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT. As the world grows smaller with increased communications and transportation systems, and with recent trends in eco-tourism the Yukon Flats has ample opportunity to develop its tourism industry. Guiding and outfitting are natural extensions of the subsistence lifestyle, as locals know their land intimately. It should be noted that any tourism development should be very proactive in nature, therefore local governments and communities are in control of the flux of visitors. Within this region, tourism development is met with mixed opinion and any planning and development should include all local voices. Currently, many small-scale tourism programs exist within the Yukon Flats villages. Infra-structure development (lodges, campgrounds, trails, etc), planning, research, and effective marketing would help to create a more lucrative tourism industry on the Yukon Flats.

AGRICULTURE. Community gardens with individual household plots are currently utilized in the regional hub of Fort Yukon. Up and down the river in the villages, individual household garden plots are also found. Although the region faces tremendous extremes in climates, the Flats soil and extended daylight hours throughout the summer do create an ideal growing season for some species. There exists an opportunity within the region to develop potato crops for regional use and to develop more productive community gardening programs. The region could produce enough potatoes and enough produce to be self-sustaining as a region, once again promoting additional economic growth by keeping cash within the region instead of spending on externally produce products.

FUR INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT. Within the Yukon Flats, the fur industry is an integral part of the subsistence way of life. It utilizes a renewable resource that is readily available. Technical skills required by the industry are already in place and trapper training for specialized market preparation could easily be implemented to enhance and adapt these skills. The development of an already existing industry will bring more immediate benefits to the trappers who represent an economic distribution network that reaches every family in the Yukon Flats region.

TRADITIONAL CRAFTS / TANNING. Cottage industry development can expand a proven economy based on a traditional form of self-employment. Cottage industry development works within the existing cultural framework of the Gwich'in and Koyukon people to improve manufacturing skills and pass on traditional knowledge to those who want to retain their independent way of life. Fur and skin sewing provides an essential element to the subsistence economy. Sewing for the extended family provides cold weather gear suitable for 70 degrees below zero at less cost than ready-made clothing. To bring in cash they create value-added products from fur. For example, wild Fox pelts have become unsalable in the auction market but Fox hats can bring as much as \$150 in the village and much more in the urban market. We can enhance an already existing role within the structure of the community without seeking to change an economy that works.

An increasing tourist demand for products is being felt as a result of marketing efforts by the state and local entities. This is providing new marketing opportunities which we must be prepared to take advantage of. At the same time, we are seeing our experienced

sewers growing older and it is difficult for them to handle the entire demand while our young people have not been encouraged to view crafts production as a viable business opportunity for themselves. We need to provide an opportunity for older crafts people to ensure that younger people will also be able to benefit from this dependable resource for income.

SERVICE INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT. As has been previously noted, a large part of the existing economy consists of government employment. With the most recent amendments to PL 93-638, the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act, Indian Tribes are eligible to contract to deliver many services to their Tribal Members. By preparing ourselves to take on local control and responsibility for Health, Natural Resource Management, Fire Management, and other federal and state programs, we can expand the economy of Yukon Flats. In order to fully serve our members, we need to understand the responsibilities of contracting thoroughly and, to build our capacity to shoulder those responsibilities. It is also imperative that we build a system of service delivery that is responsive and innovative rather than replicating a system that has proven inadequate.

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Local Natural Resource Management practices promoting healthy eco-systems which maintain healthy wildlife populations and provide for Yukon Flats families is the top priority within the region. The Federal and State agencies whom have natural resource management authority and responsibility within the Yukon Flats do not have the time, funding, or local traditional expertise necessary to identify and accomplish management objectives over the expansive 55,000 square mile area that encompasses the Yukon Flats. Creating a partnership between Federal and State agencies and our villages is also essential to effective management for this means.

The villages of the Flats have developed a strategy to work together as a consortium through CATG to work with local Village Councils to develop the technical capacity and human resource skills needed to effectively manage the natural resource base for the benefit of generations to come. We have the traditional knowledge base required for the job but we need to translate this into a working relationship that creates local employment and skilled professional workers. Examples of opportunities for local control and responsibility include active involvement in pursuing wildlife management policies, addressing water quality and contamination, fire management policies, habitat restoration, and monitoring and data collection.

At present the CATG and the Tribal Governments of the Yukon Flats have working relationships with organizations such as: the Yukon River Inter-tribal Watershed Council, Native American Fish & Wildlife Society, National Institute of Environmental Health Science, the Environmental Protection Agency, US Fish & Wildlife Service, and Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Not only do these relationships need to continue to grow to enhance local management programs, but opportunities to develop a recurring funding base for Tribal Government Natural Resource Programs needs to be investigated.

FOCUS ON PLANNING / CAPACITY BUILDING / EDUCATION / TRAINING

Within any of the above efforts in Community Development, Economic Development, and Natural Resource Management a philosophy promoting Planning, Capacity Building, Education, and Training should be maintained. Only with a focus in these areas will programs and projects be successful into the future and provide for generations on the Yukon Flats for years to come. The local population of the Yukon Flats is its greatest resource, one which has unlimited potential.

OBSTACLES:

Noted obstacles to the above goals in Community and Economic Development and Natural Resource Management within the Yukon Flats region are straight forward and should be considered in planning any undertaking. The isolated nature of the remote villages creates excessive costs in : shipping, transportation, communication, and power supply. This limits possibilities in creating products for export and in locating and reaching possible markets of such products.

Another common obstacle to 'development' within 'developing' regions also afflicts the Yukon Flats, that is the obstacle of the 'brain drain.' Often educated and motivated individuals from the region leave in order to seek more meaningful work, to afford a higher standard of living with services such as running water, or to seek further opportunities for education. This issue must be addressed and incentives for such individuals to live and work in the Yukon Flats should be explored.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

GOAL #1: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. BUILD HEALTHY COMMUNITIES WITH ADEQUATE FACILITIES AND CAPACITIES TO PROVIDE SERVICES TO RESIDENTS AT A LEVEL WHICH INSURES A SOUND QUALITY OF LIFE.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. To minimize energy and utility costs in the Yukon Flats through the exploration and utilization of opportunities for **Sustainable Energy Development** (including solar, natural gas, wind, and small-scale hydro) as well as in regional bulk-fuel purchase.
- B. To improve and build village infra-structure through assistance in the development of proposals and planning for the construction of **Village Facilities**, including but not limited to: clinics, multi-purpose buildings, museums, libraries, youth centers, and operational business space.
- C. To enhance the **Quality of Life** within the villages of the Yukon Flats through the development and implementation of projects in areas including but not limited to: parks, trails & open space/ recreational facilities, personal health & sobriety, and search & rescue team development.
- D. To improve the effectiveness of Community Development efforts by providing **Local and Regional Planning** opportunities and assistance as requested.
- E. To **Develop the Local Capacity** in effective program development/ management/ implementation and in other skills necessary for effective Community Development projects by exploring and providing opportunities for **Education and Training**. Possible areas include: force account management training, sustainable energies technology training, certified emergency response training, etc.

GOAL #2: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. BUILD A STABLE ECONOMY THAT PROVIDES A RESPECTABLE STANDARD OF LIVING AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRIBAL COMMUNITIES IN THE YUKON FLATS FOR DECADES TO COME.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. To create jobs and timber and lumber self-sufficiency within the Yukon Flats through the development of **Forestry and Timber Production Programs** in the villages, including, but not limited to: forestry stewardship programs, forest inventories, sawmill operator training, value-added forest products research, and forestry planning.
- B. To create jobs and a supplemental year round income base through the development of **Tourism** programs at local and regional levels including, but not limited to: outfitting & guiding, infra-structure development, market research, advertising development, web-based marketing, and eco-tourism.
- C. To develop **Agricultural Programs** on the Yukon Flats which provide for local community and regional consumption, including but not limited to: community gardening projects, feasibility studies for cash crops, and potato farming projects.
- D. To create jobs and a source of economic opportunity through the development of a regional **Tannery** which meets local, regional, and perhaps international needs; feasibility studies for both a traditional and a commercial tannery will be explored.
- E. To protect and enhance the **Trapping Industry** in the Yukon Flats by supporting the CATG Fur Coop Program with any necessary assistance.
- F. To utilize the creativity, innovation, and productivity of the Yukon Flats skin sewers and beadworkers to create a **Traditional Craft Industry** that produces income and meets the needs of the growing outside market, including projects in: training of youth, marketing studies, creation of beadwork cooperatives, craft center development, living museums, and development of web-based sales.
- G. To stimulate **Small Business Development** through the provision of technical support, planning assistance, and regional workshops.
- H. To improve the effectiveness of Economic Development efforts and programs by providing **Local and Regional Planning** opportunities and assistance as requested.
- I. To **Develop the Local Capacity** in effective program development/ management/ implementation and in other skills necessary for effective Economic Development projects by exploring and providing opportunities for **Education and Training**. Possible areas of training include: technical forestry management skills, developing business plans, and guide certification, etc.

GOAL #3: NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT. DEVELOP LAND MANAGMENT, RESOURCE MANAGMENT, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION PROGRAMS IN THE YUKON FLATS, IN AN EFFORT TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE A HEALTHY SUBSISTENCE LIFESTYLE INTEGRATED WITH A CONTEMPORARY CASH ECONOMY.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. To enhance **Environmental Health** on the Yukon Flats through Tribal Government programs to sustain healthy eco-systems which provide for the subsistence lifestyle. The documentation, prevention, and mitigation of sources of pollution and contamination; water quality; solid waste disposal; and other pressing issues in this region need to be addressed.
- B. To locally exercise proactive **Fish & Wildlife Management** practices on the Yukon Flats through Tribal Government programs to provide healthy eco-systems which provide for the subsistence lifestyle into the future. Documentation of harvest data, resource use, and user groups should be included in this effort, as well as the creation of working groups on species population management.
- C. To build **Habitat Protection and Restoration** strategies on the Yukon Flats through Tribal Government programs to provide healthy eco-systems which provide for the subsistence lifestyle into the future. Documentation and mitigation of contamination and habitat degradation projects will be included in tis effort, as well as reducing threats to subsistence practices.
- D. To improve the effectiveness of Natural Resource Management efforts and programs by providing **Local and Regional Planning** opportunities and assisstance as requested. Providing Tribes with the technical assistance necessary to create long-term comprehensive integrated resource management planning will be included in this effort.
- E. To create self sustaining, soveriegn village-based Tribal Natural Resource Management Programs through the investigation, pursuit, and development of techniques to create and manage a **Recurring Funding Base** to support these programs and efforts.
- F. To **Develop the Local Capacity** in effecitve program development/ management/ implementation and in other skills necessary for effective Natural Resource Management projects by exploring and providing opportunities for **Education and Training**. Possible training areas include: technical mapping skills, water quality testing skills, harvest survey skills, and soil sampling, etc.

GOAL #4: CULTURAL & TRADITIONAL SUSTAINABILITY. PROMOTE UTILIZATION, PRESERVATION, AND DOCUMENTATION OF TRADITIONAL CUSTOMARY NATIVE PRACTICES TO MAINTAIN A STRONG TRIBAL IDENTITY.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. To promote the acquisition and use of the **Gwich'in and Koyokon Language** through locally based language education initiatives and programs.
- B. To promote healthy families through **Sobriety** programs and events.
- C. To promote and protect **Subsistence Use on Traditional Lands** through education of local and non-local user groups.
- D. To provide arenas to convey Cultural and Traditional Knowledge across generations through cultural camps and programs, in areas including, but not limited to; sewing, tanning, story telling, traditional songs, traditional dance, and other skills.

GOAL #5: PROGRAMMATIC DEVELOPMENT. BUILD AN EFFECTIVE PROGRAM THAT CAN PROVIDE VALUABLE ASSISTANCE TO THE VILLAGES ON THE YUKON FLATS.

OBJECTIVES:

- A. To revise and maintain appropriate drafts of the Yukon Flats RC&D **Area Plan & Plan of Work** which serve to provide guidance to the program.
- B. To increase local awareness and knowledge of the Yukon Flats RC&D program through **RC&D Village Outreach** including newsletters, poster projects, and meetings with Tribal Village Councils.
- C. To develop appropriate **Policies & Procedures**, as requested by the Board, for RC& D functions to create an effectively functioning program which can serve the region efficiently.

AGREEMENTS

The RC&D program will be conducted in compliance with the non-discrimination provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other nondiscrimination statutes, namely, Section 504, Title IX, and the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 and in accordance with the regulations of the Secretary of Agriculture (7CFR-15 Subparts A&B), which provide that no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, age, religion, sex, marital status, or handicap be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any activity program or activity receiving federal financial assistance from the Department of Agriculture or any agency thereof.

The Yukon Flats RC&D Council agrees that the signing of this document constitutes agreement to comply with federal laws concerning restrictions on lobbying, a drug-free workplace, and responsibilities for non procurement, suspension, and disbarment, and state review.

The Yukon Flats RC&D Council hereby adopts this RC&D Area Plan and agrees to effectively use the assistance provided by the United States Department of Agriculture to realize the goals and objectives outlined herein.

Yukon Flats RC&D Council, Alaska

Approved By: _____ Date: _____
Chairman

This action authorized at an official meeting of the Yukon Flats RC&D Council in July 2001 in Stevens Village, Alaska.

U. S. Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service

Approved By: _____ Date: _____
Alaska State Conservationist, NRCS